

## ERAP HSS Success Stories

Providers shared success stories made possible with this funding. Below is just one success story each from nineteen of the twenty total SFY23 – SFY25 ERAP HSS providers:

*A client evicted from a Burlington hotel arrived in Bennington on the bus. They had no money and were experiencing mental health challenges. After coming into BROCC and completing a Coordinated Entry intake, their ERAP-funded housing specialist helped them find an available apartment, expedited financial assistance, and since the client had a housing voucher, they were able to move into the unit that same day.*

- BROCC Community Action

*With ERAP HSS support, 97.33% of the households who received housing retention services [through Burlington Housing Authority] maintained their housing. One specific success story is: After receiving a referral from a community partner regarding an individual with a large amount of back rent, who was not receptive to assistance, the ERAP-funded housing retention specialist began reaching out to the client. The first few meetings did not go well – the client ran away from them initially (literally), but they persisted, and the client eventually agreed to meet with them. The specialist helped them to focus on their health needs, over the needs of their neighbors, and finding resources to address the back rent owed. The meetings were difficult and not helped by the client's substance abuse, but the client kept showing up, so the specialist kept working with them. With the help of community partners, the client was able to safely address their substance abuse, part of which was finding a safer rental that was free from alcohol and drug use. They were able to help the client transition their voucher to a safer residence. The client is now sober, leads the meetings around their needs, and is very focused on their goals.*

- Burlington Housing Authority

*With ERAP Retention services, we were able to assist people who had not been eligible for services before. This was vital for keeping people housed as they worked to address their barriers before getting to the court process. Because of this, approximately 93% of [our ERAP] Retention Households were able to keep their housing. It felt like true preventative measures instead of applying bandages that were too little too late. One success story: A family with notable barriers to housing due to a lack of rental history and employment, and substance use, was granted a HOME Family Housing voucher. Capstone staff provided continued case management under ERAP Housing Retention services and, with that support, helped the household set employment goals while also applying for a Section 8 voucher [since the HOME voucher is time-limited]. The household was able to get a Section 8 voucher, and a part-time job that they then turned into a full-time position with potential for growth. Capstone staff also helped the household through some challenging landlord issues regarding maintenance and property concerns that were difficult to address without Capstone's knowledge and support.*

- Capstone Community Action Agency

*A client with an emotional-support animal enrolled in our ERAP Housing Navigation services. This individual had multiple, complex, co-existing conditions that had kept him from securing identification, benefits, and housing. We worked together to create a plan to get him and his emotional-support animal securely housed and we did it. Every barrier he outlined was addressed – this ranged from clearing up the fallout of identity theft to successful engagement with a clinician, to completing the application and requirements to obtain Social Security Disability. We helped him apply for and obtain housing with a project-based voucher that allowed him to remain in our area, where he felt safest and has the most support. This client leased up in August 2022 and remains housed to this day, with his beloved service animal.*

- Charter House Coalition

*At its core, ERAP was about showing up for people – in their spaces, in their struggles, and on their terms. It was about guiding individuals as they worked towards their goals, and offering consistent compassionate support to some of the community's most vulnerable households. We balanced empathy with accountability, helping clients stay focused on achieving lasting, affordable housing for themselves and their families. Once success story in this work: One household became clients as their family was expanding. While one adult had a wonderful job and good references, they faced discrimination when looking for apartments due to a non-violent felony charge from years earlier. Neither adult had good credit or substantial rental history to get past landlord screenings. They were linked up with a local credit union and enrolled in credit counseling. The household wrote a letter for landlords addressing their background and new leaf they had clearly turned. They finally succeeded in their rental search with a local housing trust and will soon move into their new home.*

- COTS

*CCA worked with a disabled tenant and their landlord for nine months, helping preserve their housing through the ERAP while also working with them on applying for a Section 8 voucher. The involvement of the landlord, the ongoing support and forms assistance – were key to the success for this household. The tenant's rent portion went from \$1,000/month to just \$61/month. The tenant was able to maintain stable housing with a trusted and involved landlord, and the landlord was able to maintain a trusted and valued tenant.*

- Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity

*Our newly hired ERAP-funded Housing Navigator launched an initiative to meet regularly with the local landlord association and systematically reach out to all area landlords. One landlord who had previously refused to rent to refugees later contacted ECDC about a newly available unit, citing the professionalism and transparency of the Housing Navigator as the reasons for the change. This relationship has since grown, and multiple families have been housed through this new partner.*

- Ethiopian Community Development Council

*A family maintained their housing in a unit on their landlord's land for several years, but when one of their landlord's passed away, their spouse was unable to maintain the unit and sent a notice that they had 30 days to vacate the property. The family was on a fixed, limited income*

*and affordable units in the area were not available. They had to move into an unsafe and overcrowded camper without heat or running water on a relative's land, which also wasn't in their children's school district. Once referred to the Family Center, staff were able to help the household apply for and obtain a HOME Family Housing voucher and apply for all housing options. The family stated that they preferred weekly meetings to make sure all bases were covered in their housing search. After several months of persistent work, the family was offered a rental unit with an affordable housing voucher, and continued to work to find a permanent voucher so they could maintain stable housing.*

- Family Center of Washington County

*A seasonal shelter guest had been living outdoors for close to a decade. Staff met with the guest to complete a CE assessment, and helped them apply for General Assistance as their health was rapidly declining. They also connected them with VABIR (Vermont Association of Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation) so they had an expert to help them apply for disability benefits. They wanted to live in Montpelier, so they helped them apply to Montpelier Housing Authority, and, fortunately, due to a short waitlist, were able to get into a unit two months after being determined eligible. While working with the client, staff helped them get to medical appointments and continue to reapply for General Assistance. They were approved for disability benefits and have been successfully housed for over two years.*

- Good Samaritan Haven

*One of the most effective periods during this grant period was when the State of Vermont temporarily reassigned staff from various departments to form collaborative teams including with our ERAP-funded case managers...we were able to triage clients' needs more holistically. This partnership allowed our case managers to focus on housing – our area of expertise – while clients received enhanced support in health, employment, and other essential areas. A standout example of this collaborative success involved...an elderly client who had been chronically homeless and staying in a motel. The client faced multiple challenges, including substance abuse, physical disabilities, mental health issues, and a significant health disorder that caused memory loss and left them vulnerable to financial exploitation. The case manager built a supportive team that included VCCI and Senior Solutions, addressed the client's immediate needs....and identified long-term housing goals. They also worked to protect the client's income and in securing placement in an assisted living facility that met their needs.*

- Groundworks Collaborative

*A family working two jobs while living in hotels for a very long time, who will be exited on July 1<sup>st</sup>, completed the common rental application and project-based voucher applications with our Housing Navigator. They are now lined up to move into a unit after their voucher is approved!*

- John Graham Housing & Services

*A client was attempting to flee a long-term abusive relationship. They were determined to make a change and sought out [our] services. The client faced many barriers including a lack of financial resources, limited rental history, and a negative credit report due to the financial abuse they experienced. The client worked with the housing navigator to identify needs and*

*develop an action plan. This included connecting with community partners to help apply for long-term financial resources including SSDI benefits. The client worked incredibly hard and had to practice a good deal of patience as it took over a year to find suitable housing. They have remained housed since finding permanent housing and enjoy being able to host their children and grandchildren.*

- NewStory Center

*We worked with a client who had been rejected from nearly every housing opportunity we pursued together. Eventually, their name came up on a senior housing list, and they were finally able to move into their own apartment. After months of homelessness, their sense of hope had eroded. But thanks to the trust built with our team, we saw a transformation – the client was soon chatting with neighbors and rebuilding a sense of community*

- Pathways Vermont

*A notable success that illustrates the positive impact of ERAP HSS stemmed from our proactive approach during the period of recertifications and evolving program parameters. As the “step down” was announced for VERAP and benefits were adjusted, our team identified the potential for widespread client confusion and housing instability. Rather than waiting for clients to face housing threats, our case managers utilized the recertification process as an opportunity to engage in ‘post-VERAP housing strategies’. They meticulously worked with households, helping to align expectations with the changing program structure and assisting clients in realistically assessing their financial situation. For example, one household faced a significant reduction in rental assistance. Our case manager’s early intervention through detailed budgeting support and connecting them with available local HOP financial assistance enabled them to understand their new rental payment responsibilities and develop a sustainable plan. This proactive engagement, combined with direct communication with their landlord, helped prevent the accumulation of back rent, and subsequent housing instability.*

- Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)

*We hosted our second annual resource fair for landlords. This time we had 22 organizations from across the state join us - from Windham and Windsor Housing Trust and 3E Thermal to Economic Services and Sharing Housing, Inc. We didn’t see as many landlords as we’d have liked to, but it was great to have all of these organizations in one room and provide networking opportunities. I spoke with a representative of 3E Thermal for the first time, and, after the fair, was able to connect them with a landlord I’ve been communicating with for years about one of their vacant properties. The renovation process is already underway and will provide 7 apartments when completed!*

- Springfield Supported Housing Program

*A single mother with several children became homeless due to unforeseen circumstances. They had come from another state where they’d been accosted by drug dealers and other homeless individuals. She was visibly upset and scared and didn’t know what to do. She hadn’t asked for help until now. We were able to get the family into a GA motel and complete a Coordinated Entry assessment. We provided them with food resources and other basic goods.*



*Throughout the next week, we spoke on the phone or met in person every single day. We helped the family apply for Reach Up benefits and health insurance, and completed applications for housing vouchers and apartments. They were housed within 4 months and, once housed, we helped them get necessary household items. Since being housed, the children are finishing up their school year, and the ones who needed health support, have been receiving it and are actively engaging and making friends. It's been the most rewarding experience to see this family thrive in our community.*

- Sunrise Family Resource Center

*One of our Community Service Coordinators worked with a person living with severe and persistent mental health concerns. The individual held a full-time job for an extended period, despite their previous housing instability and mental health challenges. After living with roommates and their mental health challenges triggering significant fear, they ended up in their car with their pets. The client qualified for a supportive housing unit due to their placement on the Coordinated Entry list coupled with their disabling condition. Staff worked alongside this client gathering all necessary documentation to obtain placement in the permanent supportive housing unit, where they now safely reside with their pets.*

- Upper Valley Haven

*A family of four faced some challenges – when they arrived [from outside the States] the only available rental was a smaller temporary unit. And while the father was able to work, the mother had to stay home to care for their young children. Eventually, USCRI staff helped them secure a 2-bedroom unit and the family adapted quickly. By the end of their lease, they already owned a car and were able to move into a new apartment. What stood out in this case was the way the family gained support from the community. With that support and their determination, they were able to pay their rent on time, and independently search for and secure new housing, where they moved to without USCRI's help.*

- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

*A woman disabled by hearing loss and memory problems had lived in her subsidized unit for decades. When her health was better, she'd taken a job at a local agency supporting other tenants. Unfortunately, the income from that job meant her subsidy overpaid its portion of her rent. She made a plan to pay back the overpayment to the housing authority, but her memory worsened, she forgot to pay, and the housing authority ended her subsidy. The landlord sent a termination notice for non-payment. With a family member's help, she contacted a local agency for assistance, but did not receive what was needed to resolve the non-payment issues, and the landlord filed for eviction. Within days, our advocate was able to get to the bottom of the housing authority's termination of the subsidy and asked them for reasonable accommodation to get her payments back on track to restore the subsidy. We communicated with a CAP agency for help with the five month's market rate arrears, advocating for the client, and they authorized payment. With the rent paid, the eviction was dismissed.*

- Vermont Legal Aid